

Department of Environmental Services  
**Summary Report of Statewide Policy Maker Survey on Water Issues**  
January 2009

In October and November 2008, N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES) worked with the UNH Survey Center and Weston & Sampson Engineers to poll state and local decisionmakers – primarily legislators, members of local governing bodies (boards of selectmen, boards of aldermen, city councils), and local planning and conservation officials – to gauge their concerns and priorities with respect to water resources. The purpose of the survey was to assist the Legislature’s Water Resources Committee and DES in the process of developing a state water resources plan. This report summarizes key results from the survey and provides a copy of the questionnaire and a graphical summary of statewide results. The complete survey results, including a breakdown of responses by region and by type of respondent, can be found at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/wrpp/index.htm> under “Publications.” Respondents to the survey are summarized in the table below. Overall, 27 percent of the 1,578 policy makers who were invited to participate in the survey completed the questionnaire. The UNH Survey Center has indicated that this is a respectable response rate for a survey of this type.

<b>Position</b>	<b>(N)</b>
<b>State Legislators</b>	<b>114</b>
Executive Councilor	1
State Senator	1
State Representative	112
<b>Local Governing Body</b>	<b>175</b>
Selectmen/Aldermen/Mayors/Councilors etc	175
<b>Town Planners / Chairs</b>	<b>131</b>
Town Planner	17
Conservation Committee Chair	78
Town Planning Board Chair	36

### The Questions

A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this report. The survey consisted of the following:

- Seven multi-part, multiple-choice questions dealing with the following topics:
  - Drinking water and wastewater issues
  - Water quality issues
  - Recreation and navigation issues
  - Drought, flooding and development issues
  - Policy and planning issues (three questions)
- Two additional multiple-choice questions dealing with:
  - The adequacy of current state regulations
  - The enforcement of current state regulations

- An open-ended question regarding the top three water resources issues
- An open-ended question regarding channels for public information
- Several demographic or self-descriptive questions

### Results Identified by DES

The responses are summarized in the figures on pp 5-10 of this report; detailed breakdowns of the results can be found in the report referenced above. The following results are worth noting:

- Top issues: The survey asked, “If you were given 15 minutes with the Governor, what would be the top three water resource issues you would want to discuss?” Respondents filled in the blanks. These open-ended responses from 420 questionnaires were compiled and grouped into 28 issues (please see table on p 11). The following six issues had the greatest number of responses (the following numbers are not percentages).
  - Water quality and protection
    - Groundwater and aquifers (51 responses)
    - Rivers and streams (25)
    - Lakes and ponds (24)
    - Other (70)
  - DES enforcement and funding (89)
  - Water withdrawals, mostly groundwater (65)
  - Wetlands (60)
  - Groundwater and aquifer protection (51)
  - Wastewater and septic (51)
- Fewer than 30 percent of respondents felt that any of the water supply or wastewater issues is a severe or moderate problem in their area (Figure 1). However, among the issues listed in this category, “condition of water/wastewater infrastructure” was identified by the highest percentage of respondents (28 percent) as a severe or moderate problem.
- Of the 32 water resource issues that respondents were asked to indicate their level of concern with, 22 issues had more than 50 percent of respondents indicating that they were very or somewhat concerned (Figures 2 through 4). The issues that more than 70 percent of respondents were very or somewhat concerned about were:
  - Impact of development on water quality (82 percent)
  - Potential contamination of existing wells and aquifers (77 percent)
  - Loss of wetlands (75 percent)
  - Water quality of streams and rivers (74 percent)
  - Increased flooding (73 percent)
  - Shoreland development (73 percent)
  - Climate change (71 percent)
- Of the 32 water resource issues, those that had the least number of respondents very or somewhat concerned were:

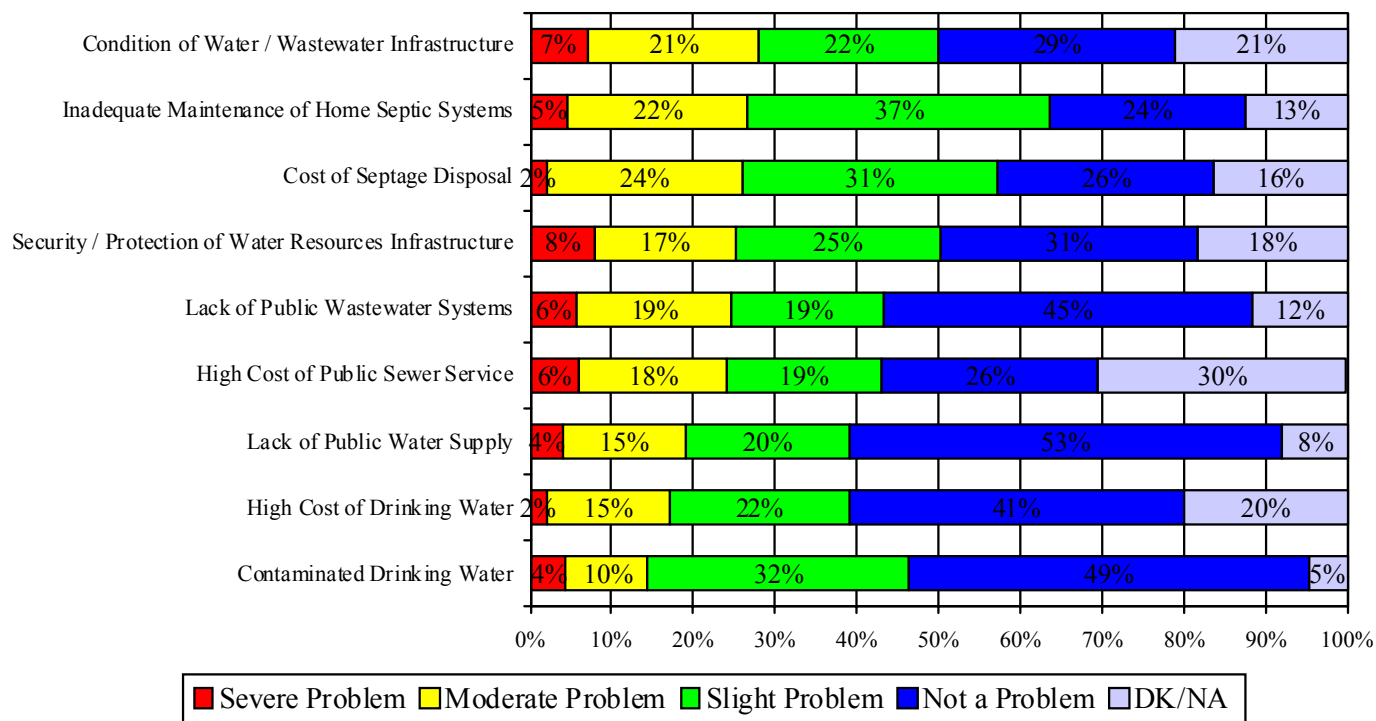
- Lack of public water supply (19 percent)
  - High cost of drinking water (17 percent)
  - Contaminated drinking water (14 percent)
- In comparison with other broad categories of water resource issues, recreation and navigation issues had fewer respondents very or somewhat concerned (Figure 3), although 64 percent were very or somewhat concerned about “Reduced beauty of lakes or streams.”
- Percentages of respondents who indicated that their communities have plans to make major capital investments in each of the following categories in the next five years (Figure 5):
  - Land conservation (33 percent)
  - Wastewater treatment (25 percent)
  - Water supply (23 percent)
  - Stormwater system (18 percent)
  - Wetlands mitigation (14 percent)
  - Dam construction/maintenance (13 percent)
- More than 50 percent of respondents answered “yes” to the following policy questions (Figure 6):
  - Should the state direct more funds toward collecting and analyzing data necessary to determine water resource conditions in order to adequately develop water policy? (64 percent)
  - Should homeowners be required to test private wells when homes are sold? (62 percent)
  - Would you support raising additional money through user fees to protect land around vital water resources? (61 percent)
  - Should additional state regulatory controls be enacted to minimize the impacts of new development on rivers, wetlands and groundwater? (58 percent)
  - Should new developments be required to implement standards for lawn irrigation conservation? (55 percent)
- More than 50 percent of respondents agreed with the following policy questions (Figure 7):
  - Water resource protection is worth the investment.
    - Eighty percent of respondents disagreed strongly or somewhat with the statement, “Sometimes it is okay to reduce water quality to promote economic development.”
    - Eighty-eight percent agreed strongly or somewhat that, “It is important to protect water resources even though it costs money.”
  - Cluster subdivisions with open space should be encouraged (76 percent agreed strongly or somewhat).
  - [The respondent] knows enough about water resources in New Hampshire to make informed policy decisions (57 percent agreed strongly or somewhat).

- Local aquifer and groundwater protection programs/ordinances are inadequate (51 percent disagreed strongly or somewhat with the statement that they are adequate).
- Fewer than half of respondents felt that current state regulations are adequate (Figure 8):
  - Only 48 percent answered “yes” to, “Are current STATE regulations adequate to protect water resources in your area.”
  - Only 28 percent answered “yes” to, “Are current STATE regulations enforced sufficiently to protect water resources in your area.”

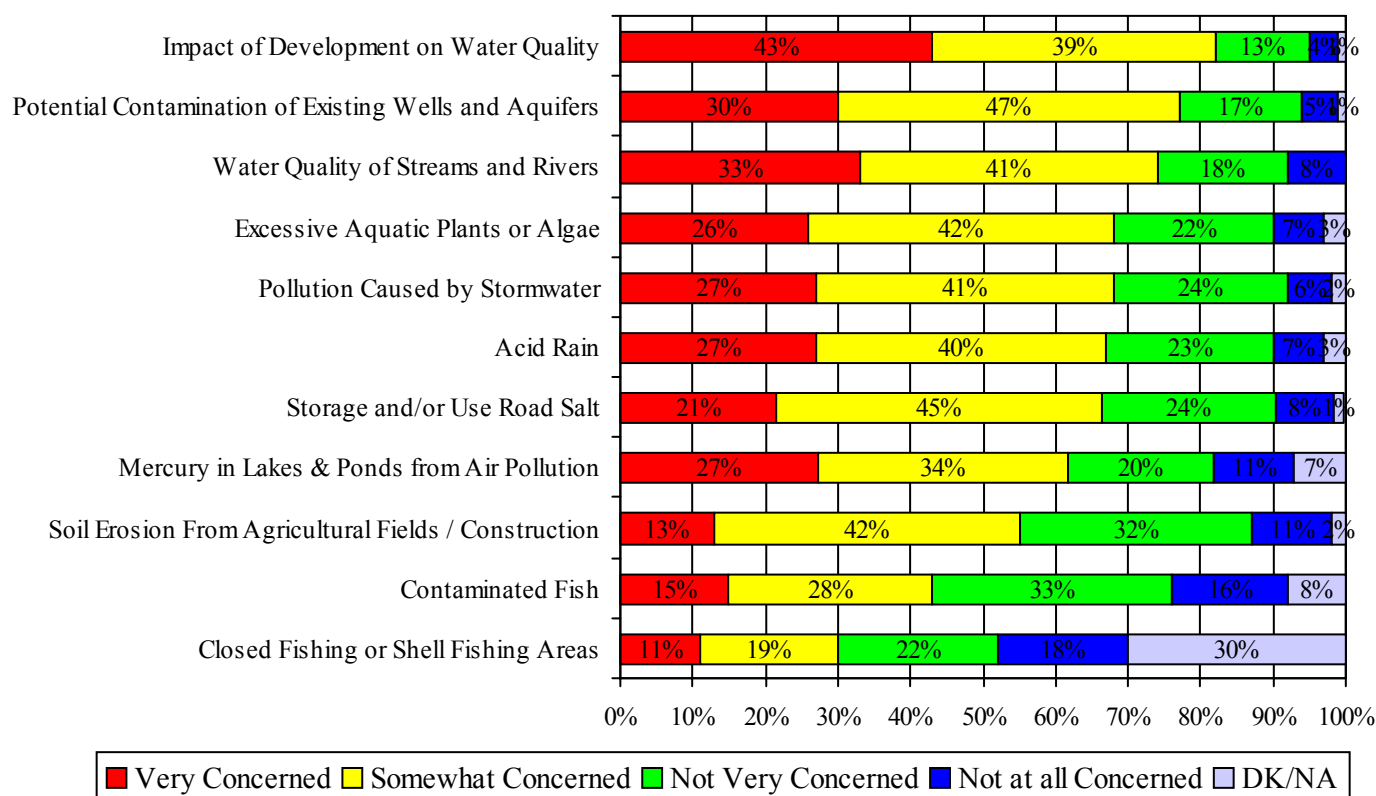
The figures and table on the following pages are taken directly from the UNH Survey Center/Weston and Sampson report cited above.

Note: For more information regarding the issues referred to in this survey, the reader is encouraged to use the *New Hampshire Water Resources Primer* (available at [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov) – under What’s New) as a reference.

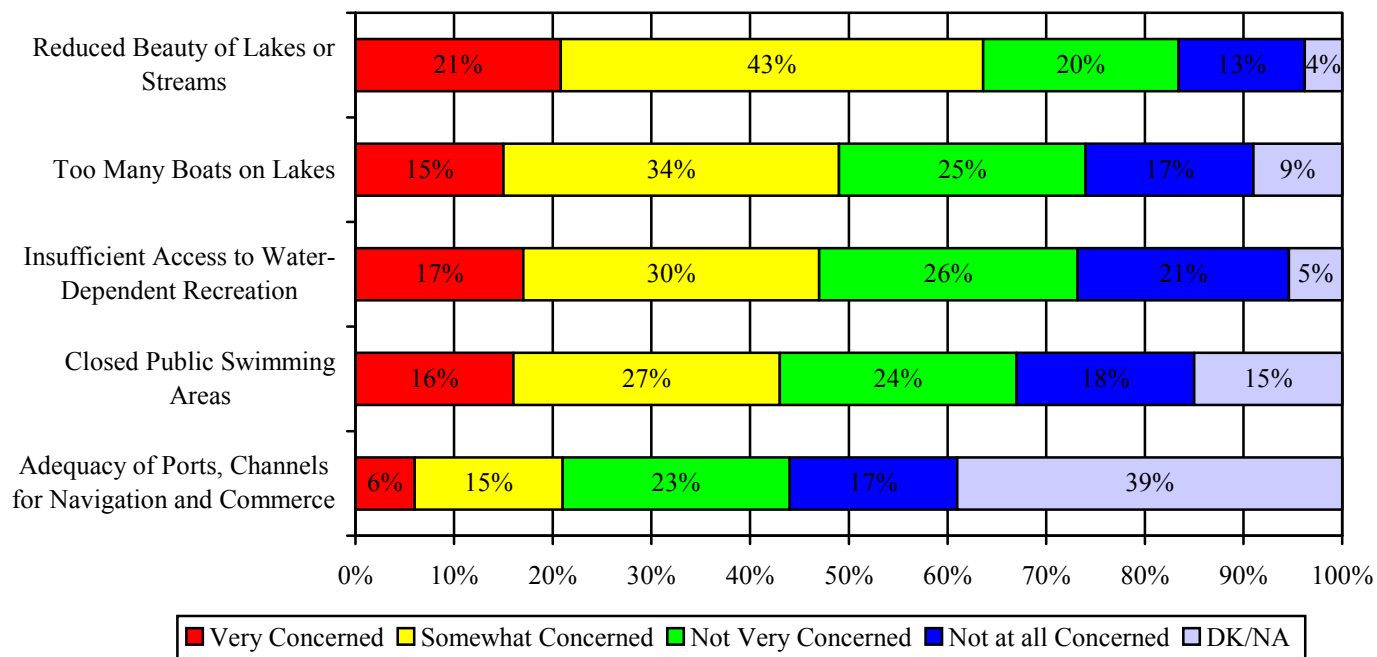
**Figure 1:** From your perspective, please rate each of the following issues with respect to drinking water and wastewater issues in your area



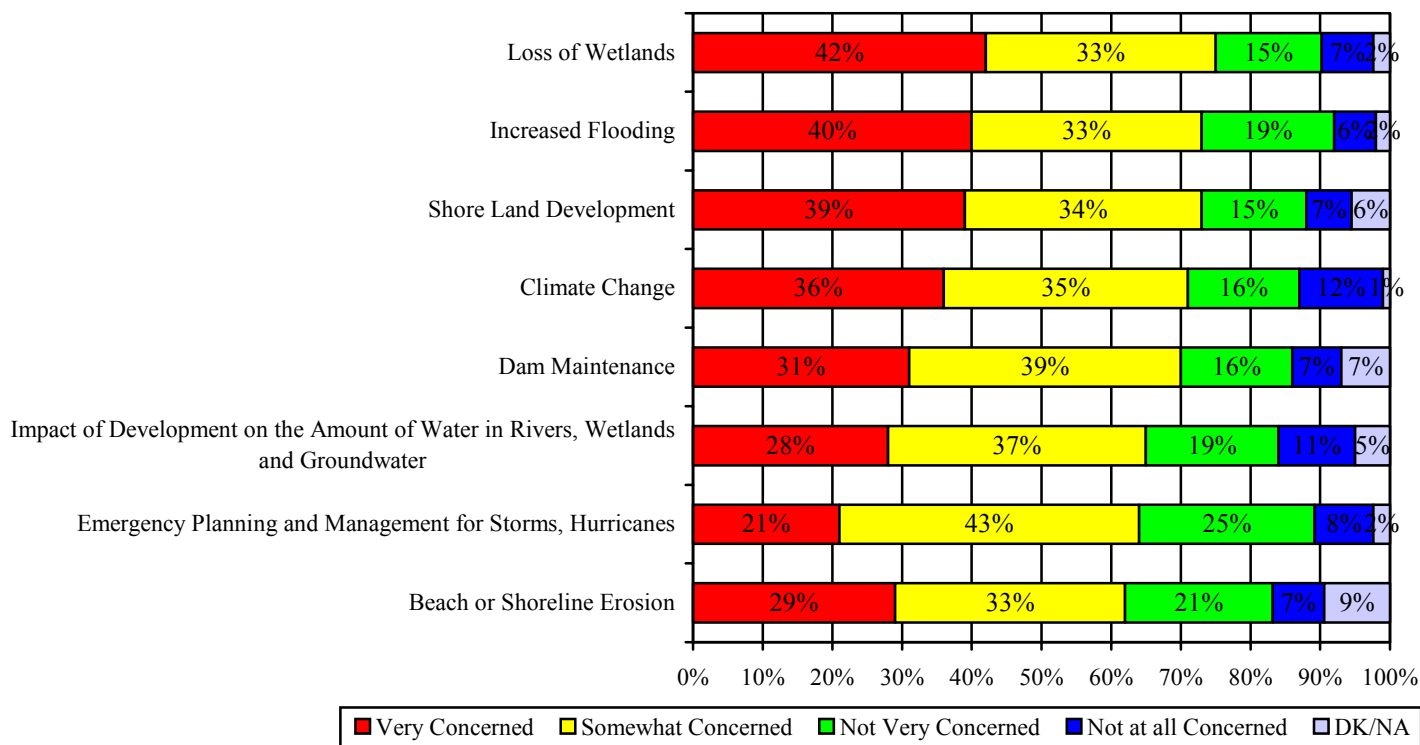
**Figure 2:** Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following water quality issues in your area



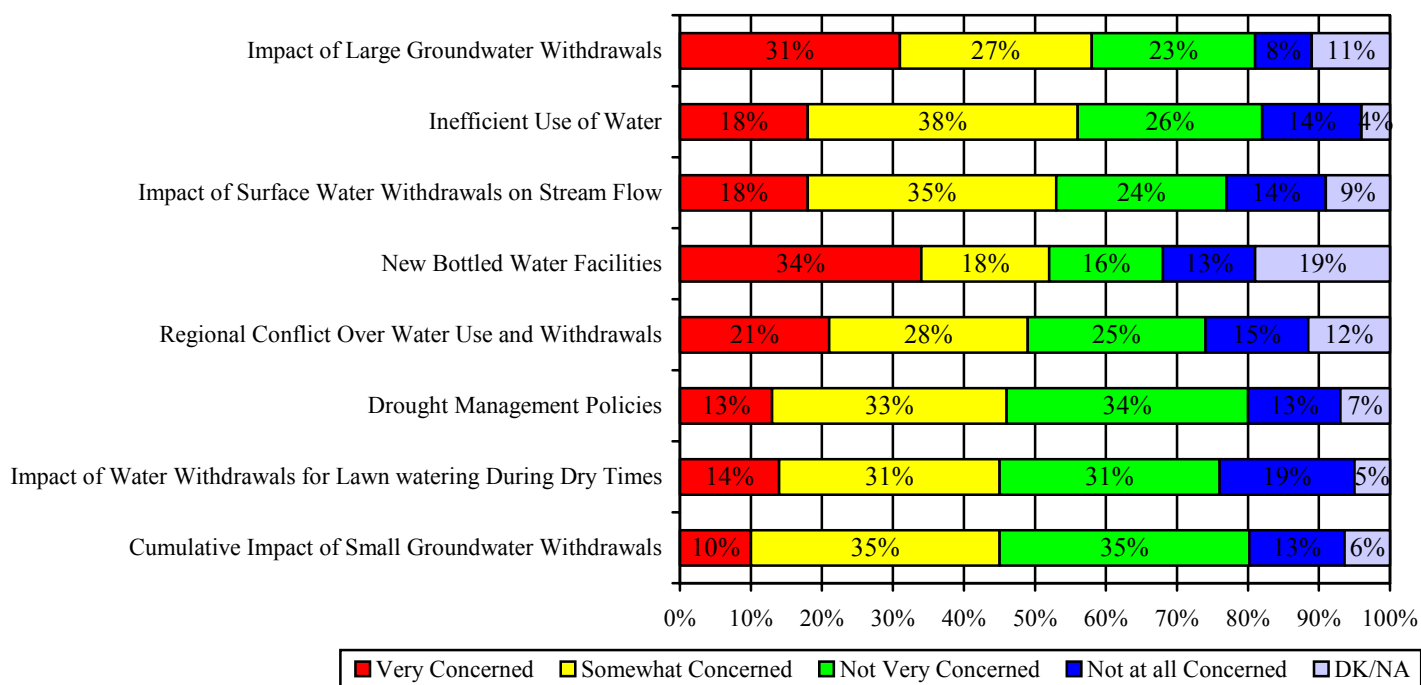
**Figure 3:** Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following issues related to recreation and navigation in your area



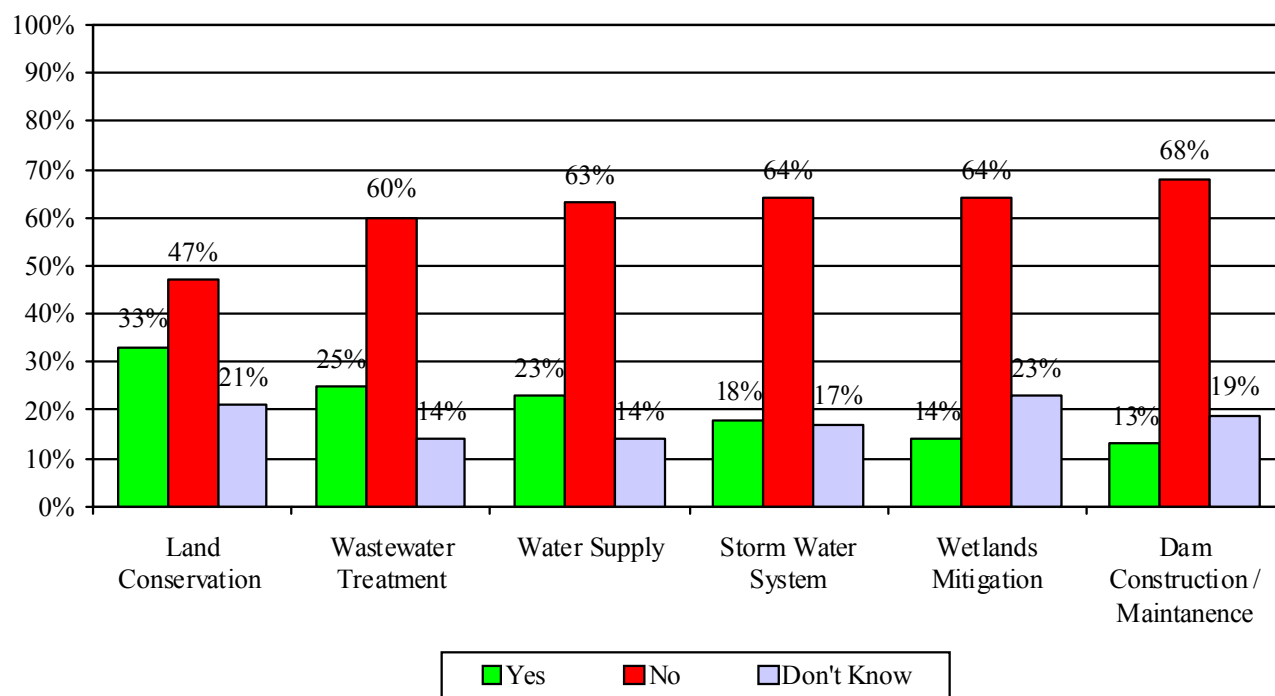
**Figure 4a:** Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following issues related to drought, flooding and development in your area – Greater than 60% Concern



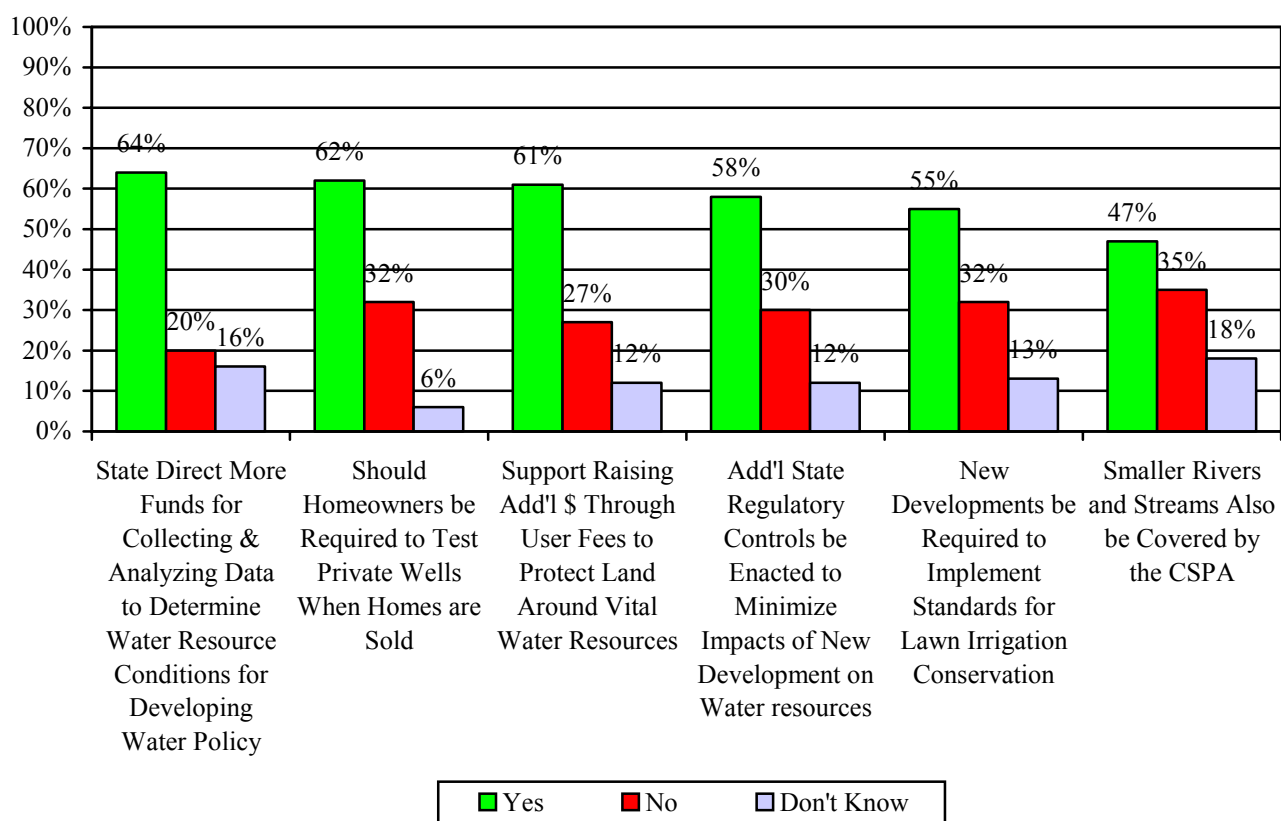
**Figure 4b:** Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following issues related to drought, flooding and development in your area – Less than 60% concern



**Figure 5:** Does your Town or district have plans to make a major capital investment in the next 5 years in any of the following?

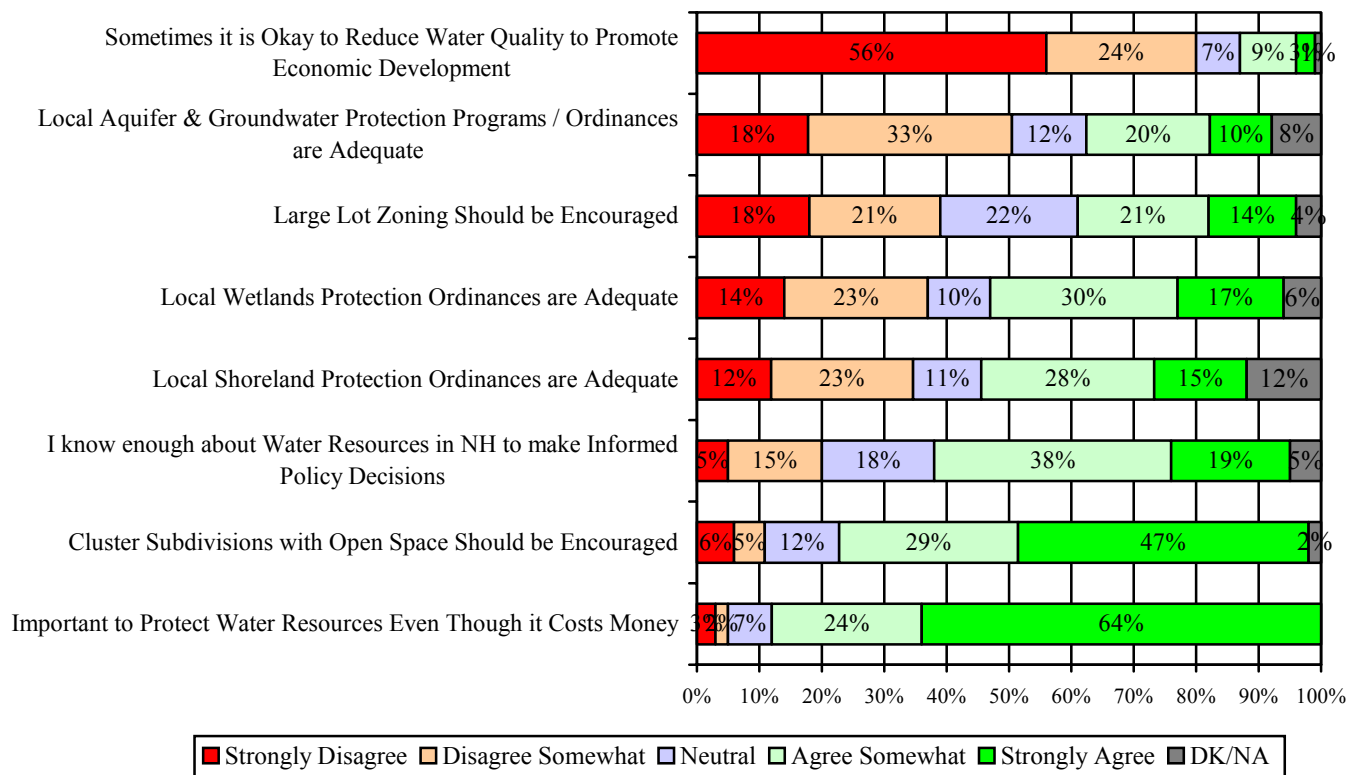


**Figure 6:** Please answer each of the following policy questions

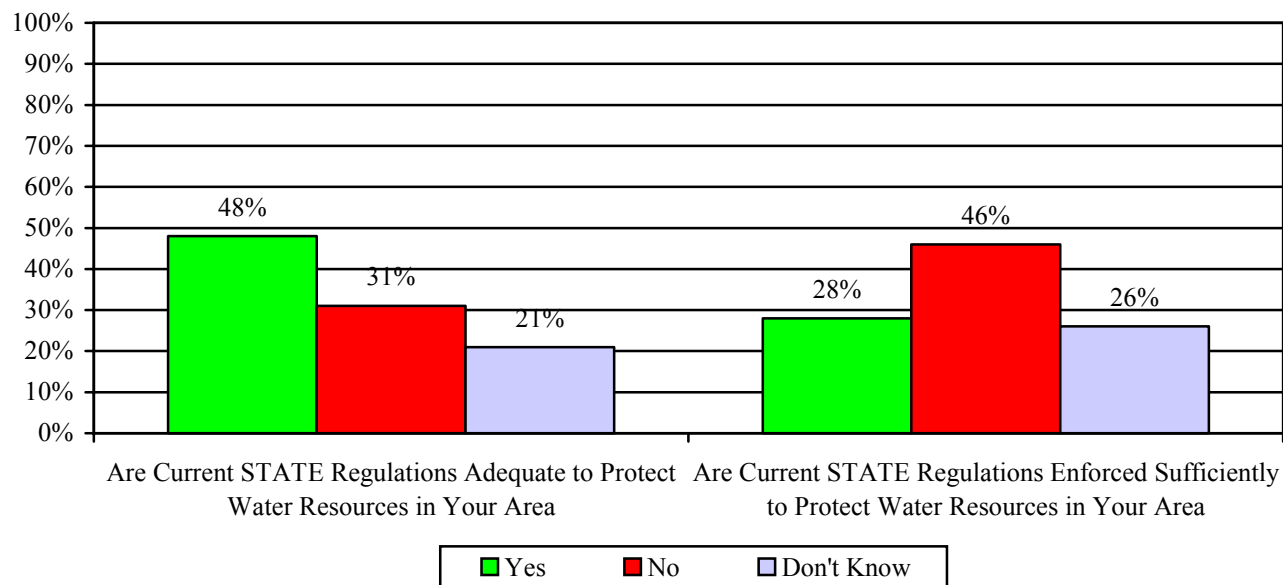




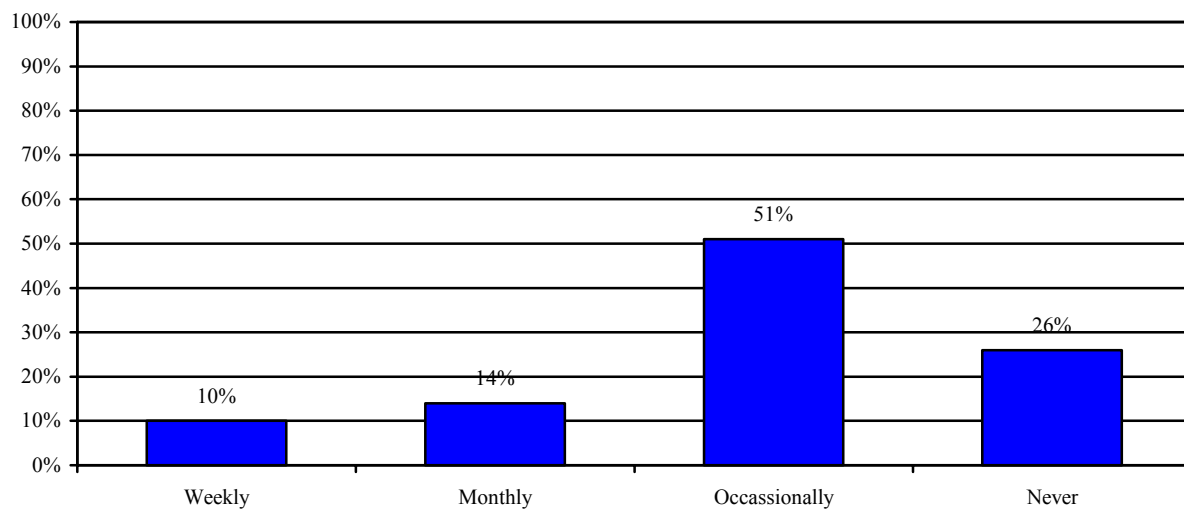
**Figure 7:** Please state your level of agreement with each of the following statements about water resource policy and regulations



**Figure 8:** Are current STATE regulations adequate to protect water resources in your area?  
Are current STATE regulations enforced sufficiently to protect water resources in your area?



**Figure 9:** How often have you visited the NH DES website (<http://www.des.nh.gov>) to obtain information about water resource and environmental issues in New Hampshire?



### Responses to Question 10

Question 10 asked survey respondents, "If you had 15 minutes with the Governor, what would be the top three **water resource** issues that you would want to discuss?" 312 people responded to this question with most of them listing three issues. A few listed only two issues while some just listed one issue. In total, there were 865 written responses. The following table summarizes the responses by general and specific issue category:

<b>Water Quality, Withdrawals and Protection</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Other Water Quality and Protection	29	22	19	<b>70</b>
Water Withdrawals, Mostly Groundwater	35	21	9	<b>65</b>
Groundwater and Aquifer Protection	18	24	9	<b>51</b>
Shoreland Protection	13	15	11	<b>39</b>
River and Stream Protection	9	10	6	<b>25</b>
Bottled Water	17	1	6	<b>24</b>
Lake and Pond Protection	3	11	10	<b>24</b>
Millfoil and Invasive Plants	8	3	10	<b>21</b>
Water Quality Monitoring and Testing	4	9	3	<b>16</b>
Total				<b>335</b>
<b>Shoreland and Wetlands</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Wetlands	24	19	17	<b>60</b>
Shoreland Protection	13	15	11	<b>39</b>
Total				<b>99</b>
<b>Climate Change, Flooding, Drought</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Flooding	6	5	4	<b>15</b>
Water Conservation	1	6	3	<b>10</b>
Climate Change	3	3	3	<b>9</b>
Total				<b>34</b>
<b>Development and Land Use</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Development	7	18	8	<b>33</b>
Land Conservation	4	4	5	<b>13</b>
Total				<b>46</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Recreation	17	4	8	<b>29</b>
Total				<b>29</b>
<b>Infrastructure and Management</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
Wastewater and Septic Systems	11	26	14	<b>51</b>
Infrastructure	12	15	9	<b>36</b>
Drinking Water	13	11	8	<b>32</b>
Stormwater and Non-Point Source Management	9	8	9	<b>26</b>
Salt Use	4	2	5	<b>11</b>
Dams	4	2	4	<b>10</b>
Total				<b>166</b>
<b>Enforcement and Control</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Total</b>
DES Enforcement and Funding	23	34	32	<b>89</b>
Local Control	10	5	5	<b>20</b>
Regional Control	3	5	11	<b>19</b>
Outreach	4	2	9	<b>15</b>
Less or Streamlined Regulation	8	2	3	<b>13</b>
Total				<b>156</b>

This survey is being conducted by the UNH Survey Center in partnership with Weston and Sampson on behalf of N.H. Department of Environmental Services and the N.H. Legislature's Water Resources Committee. Please take a few minutes to share your views by completing this confidential questionnaire. Circle the number that best represents your response. If you don't know, are not sure, or if the question does not apply to you, circle the "DK/NA" response. Please respond with respect to the area you represent, unless otherwise directed. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The UNH Survey Center is compiling responses to ensure their confidentiality. **Please return your completed questionnaire ASAP so that your opinions can be included in the compiled results.** If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 or [julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:julie.simpson@unh.edu) to discuss them. Simply enclose your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and place it in the mail. For your convenience, return postage is prepaid. If you would prefer, you may also complete this questionnaire online at: <http://www.unh.edu/survey-center/nhwp08.htm>

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Paul Susca at (603) 271-7061 or email [Paul.Susca@des.nh.gov](mailto:Paul.Susca@des.nh.gov). Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation. We truly value your opinion.

Sincerely,  
Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner  
N.H. Department of Environmental Services (NH DES)

## **Drinking Water and Wastewater Issues**

**1)** From your perspective, please rate each of the following issues with respect to drinking water and wastewater issues in your area.

	<b>Severe Problem</b>	<b>Moderate Problem</b>	<b>Slight Problem</b>	<b>Not A Problem</b>	<b>DK/NA</b>
a. Contaminated drinking water	1	2	3	4	9
b. Lack of public water supply	1	2	3	4	9
c. Lack of public wastewater systems	1	2	3	4	9
d. The condition of water and wastewater infrastructure	1	2	3	4	9
e. High cost of drinking water	1	2	3	4	9
f. High cost of public sewer service	1	2	3	4	9
g. Inadequate maintenance of home septic systems	1	2	3	4	9
h. Cost of septage (septic tank contents) disposal	1	2	3	4	9
i. Security and protection of water resources infrastructure	1	2	3	4	9

## **Water Quality Issues**

**2)** Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following water quality issues in your area.

	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not Very Concerned</b>	<b>Not At All Concerned</b>	<b>DK/NA</b>
a. Water quality of streams and rivers	1	2	3	4	9
b. Potential contamination of existing wells and aquifers	1	2	3	4	9
c. Impact of development on water quality (erosion and sedimentation, contaminated runoff, nutrient loading)	1	2	3	4	9
d. Pollution caused by stormwater	1	2	3	4	9
e. Excessive aquatic plants or algae	1	2	3	4	9
f. Soil erosion from agricultural fields / construction	1	2	3	4	9
g. Storage and/or use of road salt	1	2	3	4	9
h. Contaminated fish	1	2	3	4	9
i. Closed fishing or shell fishing areas	1	2	3	4	9
j. Mercury in lakes & ponds from air pollution	1	2	3	4	9
k. Acid rain	1	2	3	4	9

**Recreational and Navigation Issues**

3) Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following issues related to recreation and navigation in your area.

	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not Very Concerned</b>	<b>Not At All Concerned</b>	<b>DK/ NA</b>
a. Closed public swimming areas	1	2	3	4	9
b. Insufficient access to water-dependent recreation	1	2	3	4	9
c. Too many boats, etc. on our lakes, etc.	1	2	3	4	9
d. Adequacy of ports, channels, etc. for navigation and commerce	1	2	3	4	9
e. Reduced beauty of lakes or streams	1	2	3	4	9

**Drought, Flooding and Development Issues**

4) Please indicate how concerned you are with each of the following issues related to drought, flooding and development in your area.

	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Not Very Concerned</b>	<b>Not At All Concerned</b>	<b>DK/ NA</b>
a. Impact of water withdrawals used for lawn watering during dry periods	1	2	3	4	9
b. Inefficient use of water (indoors and/or outdoors)	1	2	3	4	9
c. Impact of large groundwater withdrawals (wells over 40 gallons per minute)	1	2	3	4	9
d. Cumulative impact of small groundwater withdrawals (including residential wells)	1	2	3	4	9
e. New bottled water facilities	1	2	3	4	9
f. Impact of surface water withdrawals on stream flow	1	2	3	4	9
g. Impact of development on the <u>amount</u> of water in rivers, wetlands and groundwater	1	2	3	4	9
h. Shore land development	1	2	3	4	9
i. Beach or shoreline erosion	1	2	3	4	9
j. Increased flooding	1	2	3	4	9
k. Loss of wetlands	1	2	3	4	9
l. Dam maintenance	1	2	3	4	9
m. Emergency planning and management for storms, hurricanes	1	2	3	4	9
n. Drought management policies	1	2	3	4	9
o. Regional conflict over water use and withdrawals	1	2	3	4	9
p. Climate change (including changes in storm intensity, etc.)	1	2	3	4	9

**Policy and Planning Issues**

5) Does your Town or district have plans to make a major capital investment in the next 5 years in any of the following?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
a. Water supply	1	2	9
b. Wastewater treatment	1	2	9
c. Storm water system	1	2	9
d. Dam construction / maintenance	1	2	9
e. Wetlands mitigation	1	2	9
f. Land conservation (for water protection)	1	2	9

**6)** Please answer each of the following policy questions.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
a. Public water systems are required to test drinking water quality but individual homeowners are not. Should homeowners be required to test private wells when homes are sold?	1	2	9
b. Would you support raising additional money through user fees to protect land around vital water resources?	1	2	9
c. Should additional state regulatory controls be enacted to minimize the impacts of new development on rivers, wetlands and groundwater?	1	2	9
d. Should new developments be required to implement standards for lawn irrigation conservation?	1	2	9
e. The state Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA) currently applies to fourth-order (large) rivers. Should smaller rivers and streams also be covered by the CSPA?	1	2	9
f. Should the state direct more funds toward collecting and analyzing data necessary to determine water resource conditions in order to adequately develop water policy?	1	2	9

**7)** Please state your level of agreement with each of the following statements about water resource policy and regulations.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>DK/NA</b>
a. It is important to protect water resources even though it costs money	1	2	3	4	5	9
b. Sometimes it is okay to reduce water quality to promote economic development	1	2	3	4	5	9
c. Cluster subdivisions with open space should be encouraged	1	2	3	4	5	9
d. Large lot zoning should be encouraged	1	2	3	4	5	9
e. Local aquifer and groundwater protection programs/ordinances are adequate	1	2	3	4	5	9
f. Local shoreland protection ordinances are adequate	1	2	3	4	5	9
g. Local wetlands protection ordinances are adequate	1	2	3	4	5	9
h. I know enough about water resources in New Hampshire to make informed policy decisions	1	2	3	4	5	9

**8)** Are current STATE regulations adequate to protect water resources in your area?

1. Yes                      2. No                      9. Don't Know

**9)** Are current STATE regulations enforced sufficiently to protect water resources in your area?

1. Yes                      2. No                      9. Don't Know

### **Other Information**

**10)** If you had 15 minutes with the Governor, what would be the top three **water resource** issues you would want to discuss?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**11)** What is the best way for DES to inform you about water related issues in NH? (eg: website, news releases, etc.)

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**12)** How often have you visited the NH DES website (<http://www.des.nh.gov>) to obtain information about water resource and environmental issues in New Hampshire?

1. Weekly

2. Monthly

2. Occasionally

4. Never

**13)** What is your position?

1. Executive Councilor

2. State Senator

3. State Representative

4. Member of Select Board or other Local Governing Body

5. Town Planner

6. Town Conservation Commission

7. Town Planning Board

8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**14)** What Town do you reside in? \_\_\_\_\_

➤ If different, what Town(s) do you represent? \_\_\_\_\_

**15)** How long have you been involved in local or State government? \_\_\_\_\_ years

**16)** Is there anything else you would like to share with the NH DES?

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Thank you very much for your time and participation!